

Remarks

The prior art of record fails to provide the features of the presently claimed invention. In particular, U.S. Patent No. 6,239,406 to Onoma et al. (hereinafter Onoma) fails to disclose, teach or suggest clusters of microstructures including edge clusters, dividing a cluster fragment from each edge cluster, each of the cluster fragments having a respective direction of movement, and sorting the clusters and cluster fragments to obtain data which represent a substantially optimum direction of movement sequence in which the microstructures are to be processed to increase throughput, as provided in independent claims 21 and 32. To the contrary, Onoma discloses a process for dividing into segments a processing point of the optimal control data creation function block (Onoma, col. 2, ll. 56-58) including machining position data that is divided into segments (Onoma, col. 3, ll. 41-48), and grouping X and Y directions and machining points into X-direction segments and Y-direction segments (Onoma, col. 5, ll. 30-35).

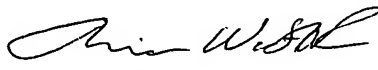
Regarding claims which depend from claims 21 or 32, Applicants contend that these claims are patentable for at least the same reasons that claims 21 and 32 are patentable. Moreover, Applicants contend that these claims recite further limitations, in addition to the limitations of claims 21 and 32, which render these claims additionally patentable.

A check in the amount of \$914 is enclosed to cover the Continuation application fee of \$770 and the eight (8) additional dependent claims filing fee of \$144. Please charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments as a result of the filing of this paper to our Deposit Account No. 02-3978 -- a duplicate of this paper is enclosed for that purpose.

The Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to discuss prompt resolution of any remaining issues necessary to place this case in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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